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C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 001969

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER'S PUBLIC STATEMENT ON IRANIAN
PRESIDENT'S ANTI-ISRAELI RHETORIC

REF: A) STATE 199225 B) YEREVAN 1930

Classified By: Ambassador John M. Evans for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (U) On November 5, Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian told students and reporters at Yerevan State University that Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad's recent statement regarding Israel "will have no impact on Armenian-Iranian relations." Oskanian told the audience that "Israeli issues have never been on the agenda of the Armenian-Iranian political dialogue."

2. (C) In contrast, on November 1 Oskanian told the Ambassador that he expected Armenian Presidential Chief of Staff Artashes Tumanian would "caution the Iranians" (ref B) about inflammatory anti-Israeli rhetoric during his upcoming visit to Tehran for the next session of the Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Commission. He said the GOAM had considered canceling or postponing the session, but decided in the end not to do so.

3. (C) Comment: Despite Oskanian's assurances, we cannot be sure that Tumanian will deliver the Armenian message of caution to his Iranian interlocutors, or, if he does, how forceful that message will be. Oskanian's public/private contradiction may be intended to balance Armenian concern for placating the USG and Armenian desire to keep deepening economic and political relations with Iran on track. Ahmadi-Nejad's recent commitment to recognize the events of 1915 in Ottoman Turkey as "genocide," has likely also contributed to Armenia's reluctance to upset the relationship.
EVANS